

man had no part in making? Such thinking comes from a basic philosophy so distorted and so out of keeping with Christian realism and God-given common sense that it should make all Christians stop and ask for time for prayer and study.

Until the attempts to *force an unnatural situation* are stopped there will be no right solution. The writer lived with, associated with and loved the people of another race for twenty-five years. Many times here in America he has been associated with people of still another race on terms of close friendship and intimacy. Wherever it is the normal Christian thing to do so he is willing to accept any natural association. But, it is his judgment that there is nothing Christian or natural in *manufacturing* situations for forced relationships whether those relationships be with people of the same race, or some other race.

Too little has been said about where Christian race relations must really begin. They begin in those daily contacts where courtesies, considerations and love should be shown *everyone*, regardless of color. They begin in divesting our minds and hearts of prejudice and pride and hatred and in treating every other person as we would have them treat us. They begin in looking on every individual who is out of Christ as a person for whom Christ died and who is loved by Him. If this involves membership in the same church as its natural outgrowth, then proceed as a Christian should. But, there is nothing un-Christian in natural selections and preferences and those who would, in the name of Christianity, force other alignments do little credit to the cause they would promote.

# REPRINT OF ARTICLE

PUBLISHED IN THE

AUGUST 17, 1955, ISSUE

OF

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL



Additional Copies Available At 15c Per Dozen

Or \$1.00 Per Hundred Postpaid



WRITE FOR FREE SAMPLE COPY OF

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL

*A Presbyterian weekly magazine devoted to  
the statement, defense and propagation of  
the Gospel, the faith which was once  
for all delivered unto the saints*

ADDRESS: WEAVERVILLE, N. C.

FIFTH PRINTER

# Christian Race Relations Must Be Natural NOT FORCED

BY DR. L. NELSON BELL

ASHEVILLE, N. C.



With that temerity often attributed to morons and their like, we would like to make a few suggestions which might possibly help to clarify our thinking on the matter of true Christian race relations.

We are fully aware that what we write will not please extremists on either side of this controversial matter. However, here goes:

Within the scope of those rights prescribed by law, every American citizen is equal. For that reason it is futile to defend any law which restricts the legal rights of any individual, or group of individuals.

Therefore, segregation by law cannot be legally defended. This in no way precludes the expediency, wisdom and right of voluntary alignments along racial or other social lines (and it should not be forgotten for one minute that it is the Christian thing at times to be expedient).

In like manner, *forced integration* cannot be defended, either on legal or moral grounds.

Both forced segregation and forced integration infringe on the legal right of the individual.

The great difficulty in the South today is that too many people are talking at odds because they are talking about different things. Another difficulty stems from those Northern friends who affirm a certain procedure as the only "Christian" procedure and who fail to be realistic, even in their own back yards.

At present the discussions in our church are based on three different factors:

A. The decision of the United States Supreme Court, declaring segregation in the public schools to be illegal.

B. The actions of our General Assembly stating that the Christian answer to the race problem is integration of the races within the area of Church relationships.

C. The feeling of many that integration of the races is both impracticable and unwise.

Regardless of the actions outlined in "A" and "B" above, there is a great host of people, represented in "C," who do not have the remotest idea of complying with these actions. Some do this with minds which are prejudiced and utterly un-Christian in their attitudes to the Negro. Some do this from genuine fear, the fear of a minority living in the midst of a majority of another race—this situation is particularly true in certain areas of the deep South. There are others—and they are as Christian in their thinking and practices as any in this world—who believe that it is un-Christian, unrealistic and utterly foolish to *force* those barriers of race which have been established by God and which when destroyed by man are destroyed to his own loss.

There is no possible excuse for the attitude of those who hate people of any race, whether it be Yellow, Black, White or Red. That such hate exists is but a tragic reminder of the sinfulness of the human heart. There is but one Christian attitude between people, regardless of race, and that is that we are all equally precious in God's sight and equally in need of His redeeming grace in Christ Jesus.

The Assistant Attorney General of the State of North Carolina has recently said: "Race consciousness is not race prejudice. It is not intolerance. It is a deeply ingrained awareness of a birthright held in trust for posterity."

"There have been in every group, and are individuals, who, despising their birthright, have been faithless to their trust. So it has been and so it is in North Carolina. But the majority of North Carolinians have been taught from infancy, and they understand how it came about that Israel became a great nation, while Edom faded into oblivion, and they agree with the great Diasraeli, who said:

'No man will treat with indifference the principle of Race, for it is the key to history.'

It is utterly foolish to think that wishful thinking, an act of the Supreme Court or an act of the General Assembly—any of these—can destroy race distinctions which are God ordained.

In too much of the discussions and actions today there is an attempt to create an *unnatural situation*, to force something, in the name of Christianity, which has nothing whatsoever to do with Christianity.

In communities where there are but few of one race it could be the wise and natural thing to absorb all races into one Church group. But, it is unnatural and forced to bring about integration where separation is desired and desirable. Let me illustrate: to hear some of our ardent integrationists today one would think that only those churches which have integrated congregations are Christian. Just how foolish can we get? In New Orleans there is a great Chinese Presbyterian Church. Are they un-Christian because they prefer to worship together? Is it not rather an illustration of the natural selection of individuals for those of similar race and cultural backgrounds? Carried to its logical conclusion the reasoning of some of our integrationists would lead to the abandoning of this Chinese church

and the absorption of the members into various congregations predominately White. There is little in this to commend it as Christian, natural or realistic.

At the same time, should it be the *natural* thing in some community for an individual or family of another race to become associated with a White or Negro or Chinese church then it would be most un-Christian to refuse membership to them because of race.

Our dilemma is caused by those who would force an *unnatural* association, in the name of Christianity. The problem cannot be solved by force, either pro or con. It *must* be solved on the basis of local conditions, and in the light of what would be the *natural* contacts and alignments. This is already done within the confines of each race. The Church has never attempted to force social relationships of any kind. It is an inherent right of the individual to choose his or her own intimate friends and associates and this does not imply anything derogatory to those not so chosen. When that barrier is broken, either within or outside racial lines, the right of the individual is violated. *It is the feeling that just such violation is contemplated by some which makes others both fearful and resentful.*

In this connection we feel constrained to say that the greatest enemies of a solution of the problem are those integrationists who say the ultimate solution of the race issue lies in intermarriage of the races. Not only is this being said but, in some instances, it is being advocated.

With all the restraint we can muster we would ask this question: what possible "solution" is there to be found in crossing racial barriers, barriers which